

## **The Duties of Elected Officers and Their Relationship with Key Functionaries in Nigerian Local Government: the Implication for Development**

**Joshua Tom Edet <sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** Local governments in Nigeria were created to bring development closer to the people at the grassroots level. To accomplish this, provisions were made in the constitution and other related documents for the present of elected officers and key functionaries whose duties include cooperation in the administration of the local government affairs. It is generally argued however, that, both elected officers and the key functionaries of the local government areas in Nigeria have failed to cooperate to perform their duties creditably thereby denying the local government the much desired development. This work was undertaken to assess the elected officers' commitment to their duties as well as their relationship with the key functionaries of the local government and the attendant effects on development. The findings revealed that the elected officers and key functionaries have reneged on their duties and wallowed in internecine feuds. These have significantly affected development at grassroots level. Descriptive research method was used in gathering facts for this work. The work proposed that for meaningful development to take place at grassroots level both elected officers and key functionaries must develop mutual confidence and respect among themselves. It recommended among others that both elected offices and key functionaries must show sufficient commitment to their duties for better decision making and service delivery.

**Keywords:** local government; elected officers; key functionaries; relationship development

### **Introduction**

Local government in Nigeria is that tier of government that is closest to the people and are vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. There is no nation in the world without a local government system except that system differs. In Nigeria, through a series of reforms, executive pronouncements, and decrees as well as actual practices, over the years, the local

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<sup>1</sup> PhD, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Uyo, Nigeria. Address: Ikpa Rd, Uyo, Nigeria, Tel.: 08029424886, Corresponding author: edettom444@yahoo.com.

government administration has become and has been accepted as the third tier within the structure of government of the Nigerian Federal Republic. Local government, as Ola (1984) asserts, is a government at a local level exercised through representative council, established by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers give the council substantial control over local affairs, the responsibility to provide services, determine and implement projects of state and federal governments in their areas as well as ensure through devolution of functions to these councils and the active participation of the people and their traditional institution, that local initiative and response to needs and conditions are maximized. As a level of administration, therefore, it performs its statutory or constitutional functions and, secondly, serves, in the parlance of system theory, as a support mechanism for the wellbeing and survival of the rest of the tiers of the Nigerian Government and agent of development at the grassroots level. If local government must achieve its goals, the elected officers and the appointed functionaries of local government must work harmoniously to perform their duties creditably as assigned to them by law. The experience so far, however, has shown that the socio-economic role of local government has been relegated to the background, as elected and appointed officers as well as key functionaries more often than not wallow in conflicts as they see power as an avenue to wealth rather than services to humanity.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Local government is both a political and administrative structure closest to the people. It is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain. In the words of United Nations Office for Public Administration quoted by Ogunna (1987), local government is defined as:

- A political subdivision of a nation or (in a federal system) state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purposes. The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected (p. 369);
- However, the conceptualization by guideline for implementation of 1976 local government reforms in Nigeria expanded the meaning of local government to include the purpose, functions and its operation. As cited in Ola (1984), it conceived local government as:
- Government at a local level exercised through representative council, established

by law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the provision of services and to determine and implement project of state and federal governments in their areas and ensure through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation of the people and their traditional institutions, that local initiative and response to needs and conditions are maximized (p. 7).

In a heterogeneous and federated country like Nigeria, Aziegbe (1989) notes that Local Government constitutes the most significant level of government at which the force to sustain national development can be established. He maintains that it would be administratively cumbersome for all tasks of government in the greatly varied localities of Nigeria, from the large industrial cities to the small rural unit, to be carried out by agents of the central government or by a process of deconcentration. Hence the 1999 constitution just as previous ones has assigned responsibility for local affairs to local people who can assess local needs and exercise local discretion and initiative.

The needs for setting up local government and the purpose they serve in all communities in Gboyega's (1988) view, is to enables services of local importance only to be locally administered, provides education in citizenship, provides training in political leadership, makes available to the central government information about localities which is essential for adequate meeting of their needs efficiently and minimizes concentration of political power by diffusing it. These values promote democracy and sustain development at local level.

These needs have been itemized by Bajela (1986) to include:

1. bring government to the grassroots level, thus encouraging a sense of belonging among the local populace;
2. facilitate effective and efficient government administration;
3. foster even and rapid socio-economic development of the communities they serve;
4. promote effective and efficient communication link between the central government and the people at the grassroots level;
5. encourage greater public participation in governmental activities;
6. provide utility services and amenities to the local people; and
7. help the central government in the maintenance of law and order.

Hunt (1961) describes a role as the channel for social or professional activities

provided for individuals or persons by the institutions with which they are associated or in which they work. Put differently, the role is the duty or function that the individual performs in an institution or at a status. It is the part or character that an actor presents in a play or a proper or customary function. The lexical approach is literary, somewhat, but both renditions sum up to a subject's function in a unit. As for relationship, it simply means connection or association between people. This could be blood, emotional, officials, etc. in the case of the elected officers of the local government council the connotations of the renditions adumbrated above tend to apply. It should also be noted from the above that this work uses functions, duties, and responsibilities as synonyms.

The elected officers in the local government are the chairmen and elected councilors who are aided by supervisory councilors. On the hand, the key functionaries are very experienced or specialized workers. Some are field or area experts. They include the Treasurers, Accountants, Education Officers, Medical Officers, etc.

### **Local Government Reforms in Nigeria**

For local government to function effectively and bring development closer to the people at the grassroots level, many reforms had been introduced by federal government. One of such reforms and probably the most significant is that of 1976. The 1976 Local Government Reforms are regarded as the elixir which injected life into the local government and was designed as a means of taking the presidential system of government to the grassroots. The reforms introduced a single-tier multi-purpose structure of government at the local government level (Special Duties Dept., 1996). The structure was entrenched in the 1979 Constitution and has only suffered some amendments and modifications during subsequent reviews. The 1976 reforms were envisaged as a way of stabilizing and rationalizing government at the grassroots in Nigeria.

According to the reforms, all statutory and public service functions of local government in Nigeria should be concentrated in a multi-purpose single-tier institution called local government with complete and self-contained budgets, so that the whole system of local government within any area can be identified, costed and coordinated. The reforms fixed the population for a separate local government at the range of 80,000 to 150,000 people, though in exceptional circumstances which were not specified it could vary. The population range brought the number of local government areas in the country to 301. The reforms also provided for the exclusive

or obligatory functions for the local government as well as some concurrent or optional functions.

The reforms had some structural uniformity where the local governments were harmonized. It fixed the number of committees, with the Finance and General Purpose Committee serving as the cabinet of the council. The reforms recognized local governments as the third tier of the presidential system of government which entitles it to adequate and reliable sources of internal funding and allocation from the federation account. The reforms also provided for a fixed tenure of office for councilors, established a Local Government Service Board; provided distinction between the traditional rulers and the government where the traditional rulers are restrained from active participation in politics and active involvement in local government matters. They set aside 15 per cent of the federal revenue and 10 per cent of the total collected state's revenue for the local governments.

The reforms, taking into consideration the low caliber of personnel in the tier of government, caused to be initiated university certificate, diploma and post-graduate diploma programmes in public and local government administration. The purpose was to improve the educational standard of staff in order to reduce frustration and low morale among them. The universities selected for the programme were Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (for the North), University of Ife (Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile Ife, (West) and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, (East) (Special Duty Dept, 1996).

In summary the objectives of the 1976 Local Government Reforms as cited in Adeyemo (1995) were

- (a) To make appropriate services and development activities responsive to local wishes and initiatives of involving of delegating them to local representative bodies
- (b) To facilitate the exercise of democratic self-government close to the local levels of our societies and to encourage initiative and leadership potentials.
- (c) To mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public in their local development.
- (d) To provide a two-way channel of communication between local communities and government (both state and federal).

It is therefore correct to say that the 1976 Local Government Reforms are the bulwark for all sub-sequent reforms and developments in the systems. The reforms provided enhanced conditions of service for the employees, in line with what is

obtained in the state and federal public services. They also checked usurpation of and encroachment on the powers and duties of the local governments by the state governments.

With the re-emergence of the military in politics there were additional Local government reforms in 1984 and in 1988, when the federal military government introduced civil service reforms which also affected local governments (Olu, 2004). To ensure professionalism in the local government service, creation of departments of personnel, finance, supply and offices for councilors, secretary, treasurer, auditor-general for local government were made mandatory. The 1988 reform also clearly defined the functions of the Local Government Service Commission, which sets guidelines for staffing and monitoring local governments. All these provisions sought to institute responsible local government in the Nigerian federation (Abdulhamid & Chima, 2015).

There was creation of more local governments from 301 to 453 in 1989 and 500 in 1991. The newly created local governments were recognized by the federal government, and it encouraged more democratic participation of the local people in politics of the state. The introduction of presidential system of government at the local government encouraged the practice of separation of power and democracy in the local government. The executive council was separated from the legislative council, with defined democratic mandate to run the affairs of the council. Within this era, there were local government elections, and the elected chairmen became the accounting officers of the council, and answerable to the local people. As an attempt to increase local participation in democracy, the Abacha's regime created more local governments in 1996, bringing the number of local government to 774. The regime replaced the presidential system with parliamentary system. The parliamentary system was aimed at reducing cost of administration for the local government, but was not encouraging to the nascent democracy in the local government in terms of applying the policy of separation of power (Wilson, 2013).

The local government experienced another reform during the era of military rule under General Abdulsalami Abubakar government between 1998 and 1999. The military government as earlier mentioned reversed the parliamentary system to presidential system in the local government, and conducted successful elections in all the local government councils in December, 1998. The government further recognized and included local government for the second time in Nigerian Constitution of 1999, as contained in the section 7 of the constitution. The section had increased local participation in politics as it gave local people the opportunity to

elect their leaders during council's elections. The 1999 constitution most importantly empowered the local government to function as a third tier of Nigerian government with specific constitutional schedules for democratic development. Ironically too, the 1999 gave a lot of powers to the state governments to control the local governments within their domain.

The 1999 constitution made the chairman the chief executive presiding over an executive team of supervisors on one hand and a team of councilors forming the legislative arm in the other hand. Thus, there were checks and balances. The 2002 reforms undertaken by Obasanjo Administration more or less reinforced the 1976 input.

### **The Duties of Elected Officers**

The earliest document which formalized the roles, duties and responsibilities of the local government came out with a foreword signed by Major-General Yar'adua, under the title "Guidelines for the unified Local Government in 1976". The same information was reproduced in Schedule Four, Section Seven, of The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 and 1999 respectively under the caption, "Functions of Local Government Council" (Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Since then and up till now, in spite of reforms or shift in emphasis or stress, not much has changed on the whole.

A council is not merely a corporate body with legal identity, it is also a meeting of people who wish to discuss their common problems and find answers with which they all agree (Benemy, 1968). Councilors owe their responsibilities to the people on whom sovereignty resides and to whom the councilors offered themselves for election. The Chairmen and all the councilors are important people in the community. The people honour and respect them. They are expected to be wise and experienced. The people, furthermore, expect their chairman and all the councilors to love them and the entire local government area. This means seeing that the functions outlined for the council are faithfully performed. The councilors must be willing to give up a good deal of their time to read up papers of the council and attend its meetings. Most of all, they must know that they are, as now, elected officers. To say this is to say that they are representatives and doing to the masses what the people should do for them in a direct democracy.

What is said here about the local government area is also true of the State and the Nation. Councilors are to consistently display unalloyed commitment to the

performance of duties and responsibilities to the state and the nation as specified in the Constitution and other relevant instruments of the council. It is in doing this that the local government administration justifies its essence, clearly, as a working organ or tier within the systemic process of the Nigerian Federal Republicanism.

The Chairman is the most important elected officer of the council and is expected to hold regular meetings with the Vice Chairman and all the Councilors for the purpose of determining the general direction of the policies of the Local Government (Awotokun, 2005). He is also responsible for coordinating the activities of the Local Government and generally discharging the executive functions of the Local Government. The Local Government Chairman also presides over all the meetings of the Council; and cause to be prepared and laid before the Council the budget which comprises of the revenue and expenditure of the Local Government Area. Beside the chairman, are other elected officers. These other elected officers have as a duty to represent the views of their community and their needs. This is not restricted to their own wards as they must be objective and take into consideration the needs and well-being of all citizens in the local government as a whole. It is theirs to spend a great deal of time with their constituents through holding drop-in surgeries and corresponding and engaging with their constituents on a wide range of matters. Elected officers have a duty to scrutinize the performance of the Council in delivering against the priorities and targets which are set. Continuous scrutiny of targets against outcomes is vital. They have a duty to deliver the priorities set by the government and to decide how best those priorities can be delivered in a local context.

It is their duty to attend as much as possible all the committee meetings. It must be noted that this is necessary because some of the elected officers' work are done through committees. Where it is possible, the committees have to publish their reports in advance and allow the press and public to attend meetings with some exemptions for confidential matters (Bankole, 2006). Additionally, most of the elected officers' income is derived from central government which requires that they must work within fairly tight limits when setting budgets therefore balancing these responsibilities. Consequently, during the regular committee meetings, decisions are made which may take a great deal of time. In summary the duties and responsibilities of the elected officers of the local government in Nigeria include:

- Provide political / strategic leadership setting out policy framework within which the council operates



- Make decisions on major local and national priority issues
- Provide community leadership by representing the views of the community and community engagement
- Ensure statutory duties of the council are carried out
- Adhere to the national Code of Conduct for Councilors
- Be open and transparent
- Constantly attending Council meetings and other committee meetings that they are members.
- Actively participating and partaking in the debates and deliberations sequel to the passage of Local Government Bye-Laws.
- Actively participating and partaking in the debates and deliberations sequel to the approval and passage of Local Government annual budget estimates.
- Monitoring and supervising the execution of capital and other projects in the Local Government Area, especially those in their respective Wards.
- Mobilizing their respective communities to participate in community development projects.
- To serve as members of any committee established by the Council or the Chairman.
- Serving as agents in their respective Wards in the maintenance of peace and security.

In contemporary times, the demands of the local government system as Okobiah (2006) notes have increased tremendously, following the increase in the provision of essential services including markets, works, roads and transport, schools and other educational services, sanitation, sewages, hospital and medical services and provision of such services led to the demands for increase in full time and paid officers, who are selected and appointed not on social lineage or patronage, but essentially on the basis of their technical and professional expertise. The administrative/technical personnel of the Local Government which are the key functionaries are the staff that carry out the general day-to-day administrative and management activities of the Local Government. These technocrats employed for the purposes of carrying out day to day services and activities of the local government administration have become the main permanent and paid officers of

local government.

The paid officers or key functionaries are selected and appointed on merit basis, while the elected members are in office as long as they have the mandate for their representation in the local government councils. In essence, the elected members are amateurs who may not necessarily possess the technical and administrative know-how of the designated functionary of which he is the head.

### **Relationship of Elected Officers with Key Functionaries: the Implication on Development**

Literature is whitewashed with challenges of local government in Nigeria such as problem of armed conflicts ranging from ethnic, communal, and religious to location issues. Other challenges are poor financing and limited revenue, (Adeyemi, 2013; Ola & Tonwe, 2009) limited autonomy (Eminue 2006); (Bolaito & Ibrahim, 2014) poor political leadership, (Agba, Akwara& Idu, 2013) lack of basic social amenities such as electricity, transport and telecommunication facilities (Abdullahi, 2017) have hobbled governance at the grassroots. In addition to these is the inexperienced and unqualified personnel, corruption and misappropriation of funds, (Sherif, 2016) lack of accountability and transparency, lack of local plans and weak programming capacity (Bolaito & Ibrahim 2014) among others. Literature has virtually ignored the importance and the role of good human relationship among officers of the local government if much is to be achieved in terms of development. For local government to accomplish their goals, both the elected and key functionaries must cultivate good human relationship (Jatto, 2008). What Benemy (1968) says, however, of politicians or rulers generally is true, too, of local governments in Nigeria. Benemy (1968) makes bold to declare that man's history shows that once a man has tasted power he is not only reluctant to give up his power, but is anxious to increase it. He begins to think that he alone knows all the answers. He confuses his personal interest with the public interest. For this reason, local governments' elected officers talk and expect all to listen. They would not listen or do not listen to others and are hardly responsive to the cries or demands of the people. Because of such disposition, most of the time the relationship between the elected officers and the key functionaries of the local government as indicated in Udoji's report cited in Idang (1988) is "one of acrimony and antagonism; in a conflict rather than partnership in and enterprise, with the resultant lack of the team work necessary in modern organization" (p. 14). Such is dangerous to development.

The elected members are representatives of their villages, tribes and clans, and depend upon their popular vote to be elected into the office. They are as Okobiah (2006) asserts equally susceptible to parochial consideration and hence divergent in circle of loyalty orientation. On the other hand, the paid officers remain permanent in office which demands that they also remain partial in the discharge of duties. While they are duty bound to be loyal to the elected members, they are required to be guided by professional competence. In most cases, however, a strained relationship developed between the elected officers and key functionaries particularly when their advice seems to appear adverse against the political prudence of the elected members. This had led to a great number of controversies, as elected members seek to remove the paid officers from office by all means. Cases were numerous in the past and still abound where local government structures behaved as hostile camps. The Chairman carries an almighty complex which threatens to make the operation of the tier a one-man show due often to personality clash between chairmen and their deputies on one hand and between elected officers and key functionaries on the hand. Some chairmen have sidelined their deputies and other elected officers who are not in their camps and denied them of benefits that should accrue to their offices such as official vehicles and portfolios. Even when these chairmen travel out of their areas for other national official assignments, their deputies are not allowed to stand in for them.

This resulted in sea of antagonism in which the operative agencies or institutions – chairmanship, supervisory councillorship, the council legislature and key functionaries – wallowed. Not much could be achieved under this atmosphere. Much of the public funds that ought to have been used to improve the living conditions of the masses were spent to assuage internecine feuds between the councilors and the chairmen in one hand, and between elected and appointed officers in the other hand (Umoh, 1996).

From a purely practical point of view, the intermittent conflict between the key functionaries and their elected bosses however, may not always be detrimental to administrative efficiency and probity. In some cases, it can even provide a sort of unofficial framework of checks and balances. Adebayo, cited in Idang (1988) observes that there would always be some degree of conflict between the politicians' interest to promote their political fortunes and the civil servants' duty to apply impartial rules and procedures. When such conflict, however, is sufficient enough to strain the relationship between the elected officers and the appointed functionaries, it becomes detrimental to development.

Not oblivious of the necessity of a minor disagreement in such setting as mentioned above, the increasing cases of threats of impeachment and actual impeachment of local government chairmen arising from incessant fall out between the legislative and the executive arms of the local government in one hand, and conflicts between the elected officers and key functionaries of the local government in the other hand is, however, a dangerous trend to democratic survival at the grassroots and inimical to development. Akwa Ibom State alone, for instance, witnessed not less than *three* cases of impeachment of local government chairmen in less than three years of return to civil rule (Olu, 2004). Similar cases were witnessed in a number of states of the federation during this period. Some instances of this are cited here.

For example, a council boss, in Anambra State was reported to have locked up the treasurer of her local government in her office, and ordered some of her suspected political thugs to beat the treasurer because of refusing to sign some alleged false documents aimed at retiring certain amount of unspent funds by the council boss. Even while the beating was going on, the chairman was said to have insisted that the treasurer would not go out of her office until he signed the cheque, but the council treasury manager, ignored the order, leading to more slaps on his face by the chairman and her thugs (Okpara, 2014).

In Delta State there was report of conflict that erupted between the chairman, secretary, treasurer and the acting Head of Local Government Service in one hand and other elected officers in the other hand (Sahara Reporters, 2013). The conflict erupted because the chairman and his team always outplayed other elected officers whenever the council received its monthly allocation from the federal government. In this particular occasion the chairman and his loyalists were hiding in one of the rooms in a hotel located in the headquarters of the council sharing the monthly allocation without participation of other elected officers of the local government. It took the intervention of the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, and other prominent indigenes of the local government, to bring the matter under control and taken from the police station. Even then, there had been a cold war between the chairman and some of the councilors who said that the chairman was not carrying them along in the scheme of things, especially in financial matters. The chairman was also said to have involved fraudulent practice by mean of “built-in” salary, which was described as the fraudulent smuggling of fictitious names into the council’s pay roll. In practice, as soon as the allocation arrived, the chairman and his cohorts would deduct the illegal salaries, running into millions of Naira and shared it. That manipulation had been done for several months before the interruption.

Similarly, a chairman of a local government area, had beaten up the Head of Local Government Administration of the area, for raising alarm over diversion of the council's funds. The head of administration was beaten up after he wrote a memo to the council chairman to draw his attention to massive corruption and diversion of funds in the council. This did not go well with the chairman who invited the head of administration of the local government area to his office and attacked him physically, using his shoes and other instruments available, leaving him wounded. A portion of the letter written by the head of administration petitioning the Chairman of Local Government Service Commission over the attack and exposing corrupt practices that went on in the local government said:

In the course of the discharge of my duties, I discovered that illegal collections were going on, particularly around the waterways by some people who were agents of the Transition Committee Chairman and I did my best to expose some illegal collections. I attach proofs of those illegal collections and I mark same Annexure B. (Okafor, 2018).

Crisis also erupted in one of the Local Government Councils in Enugu State when the councilors passed a vote of no confidence in the chairman of the council. The cause of conflict included financial misappropriation, conversion of local government land to personal use and forceful takeover of people's land on the part of the chairman. Besides, the council chairman had run the local government as his personal business and had refused to pay workers' salaries for three months and this had pitched him against other staff of the local government. He was said to have owed his political appointees for more than 15 months. They also accused him of resorting to holding councilors' allowances as well as false representation of issues and reports as regards the local government. These are just a few cases (Njoku, 2015). These unpleasant experiences have thwarted socioeconomic development at local government level.

Often enough, councilors are part time administrators, so to speak. They need to rely on the full-time officials that are key functionaries to be able to take wise decisions. Moreover, many of these key functionaries are very experienced or specialized workers. Some are field or area experts. They include the Treasurers, Accountants, Education Officers, Medical Officers, etc. They are the advisers to the chairman and the other councilors. The councilors also need to rely on key functionaries to carry out the policies of the council. In fact, it is they who are the real implementers of the policies of the council. The theoretical argument here is that as representatives of the people, the Chairman and Councilors are fully aware of what the public interest is.

But they are at times at the mercy of administrators who sabotage their well thought out programmes of public welfare if the relationship between them is strained due to lack of mutual respect and cooperation. This is harmful to development at local government level.

Again, the elected officers, particularly the young and inexperienced, desperately need the help and guidance of the higher-level key functionaries of local government in acquiring a grasp of the intricacies of government and administration. This is necessary because as Akpan (1989) observed, politicians, no matter how knowledgeable and experienced, need the accumulated and professional experience of career civil servants in the task of policy formulation, implementation and execution. Unfortunately, in a conflictual situation and when the relationship between the elected officers and key functionaries is antagonistic most local government administrators are sometimes reluctant to place their administrative experience and professional knowledge at the disposal of their political bosses. This is even worse if the elected officers of the local government come to their new offices with a feeling of superiority bordering on arrogance and contempt towards the administrators. The doctrine of unreserved loyalty provides a convenient shell into which administrators can retreat and re-emerge only when the political climate is more favourable.

Attempts by some local government chairmen to control the key functionaries do lead to clash and conflict between them. It is generally agreed that key functionaries are under obligation to implement policies made by the elected officers, it is, however, naive on the part of the elected officers to assume that top-ranking key functionaries of local government are mere passive creatures who lend themselves easily to manipulations and can be cowed down by elected officers' frowns. Aside from the fact that some of them are among the best products of the universities, the Nigerian civil service represents the single most important source of status, wealth and prestige in the Nigerian society. Consequently, considering Nigeria social setting, higher local government administrators would be less than human if they do not cherish ambitions and seek ways and means not merely for survival, but for getting entrenched in the system. Furthermore, an open and unreserved loyalty to a particular regime at times helps to widen cleavages of opinion within the service, increases factionalism and strengthens the belief that some are rewarded and others penalized on grounds of favouritism and partisan political considerations. Nothing could be more detrimental to local government morale and productively than the existence of such a feeling among top key functionaries.

Whereas government, including local government as construed by the social contractors, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, or the sociological physiocrat, Jean Jacques Rousseau, is an agent of the people just as the individuals who constitute it, the converse holds in Nigeria. Government, and that includes the local government, is the master and the principal.

Moreover, when Jean Bodin introduced the concept of sovereignty which was adopted by the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 as the foundation of nationhood according to Holsti (1972), the sovereign and those who personify it were meant to be conscientious individuals, that is, individuals limited and guided by their conscience (Graham & Carey, 1972). Taking its root from the Platonic tradition of the past two thousand years, governance was, therefore, a moral business. The same was the belief of the forefathers of the people of the present Nigeria. The Obong, Eze, Oba, or Emir approached and handled his duties from the standpoint of ethics (Umoh, 1994).

This is not the case today in Nigeria. The public appointed or elected officer makes his office a personal gold mine to the detriment of the general interest of the masses. Such officers use every public opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the development of the local government area or state. Some years back, for instance, a contract for the installation of already acquired electrification materials on already planted poles at a section of a certain local government area was awarded at the sum of N3, 989, 708.12. An immediate payment of N3, 221, 686.21 from the said contract sum was made. A consultant valued this job at about N1.2 million. The same job was awarded to the same contractor at a contract sum of N9, 350, 320.00 with a down payment leaving N7, 118, 320.00. Few months' latter (Umoh, 1996). The local government chairman and his council were involved to the neck in this. Today, the chairman counts his real estate in many parts of the state and country, rolls round in expensive flashy chauffeured cars, and parades as a very important person (V.I.P) in public occasions while the people are still in gloom.

An attitude of materialistic obsession which invades local governments is compounded by sectionalism. Both combine to provide a social ecology that breeds negative cultures. Elected officers and key functionaries mortgage their consciences for money and forfeit their rights as citizens. As soon as one is elected as a legislator, it gives him the opportunity to re-marry, buy a flashy car and build a befitting apartment in the capital city and only to come to his Local Government when it is time for re-election. Each and every officer goes home at the end of the month with something he is so proud of, depriving those who elected him of basic social

amenities. A good number of the elected officers are men who are strangers to the decorum, throughout their serving tenure, never for once, had they opposed a motion, not to talk of initiating one. This dwarfs development.

A sour relationship between elected and key functionaries is also arises due to non-payment of salaries and other staff claims and allowances. Instances abound where chairman and elected officers would pay themselves while others work for several months without receiving their salaries. Some key functionaries use out of pocket money to run local government administration sometimes to the benefit of the elected officers with expectation that they would be reimbursed. At times such expectation is dashed when the chairman fails to pay either the salary nor other claims at the end of the month when the allocation from federation account is received by the local government chairman. The relationship created by such situation does not augur well for any meaningful development.

At the centre of every strained relationship between the elected officers and key functionaries is the issue of revenue s, yet, revenue generation has been a theory issue in local government administration. Elected officers have forgotten that internally generated revenue is the corner-stone of local government autonomy (Odoh, A. nd). Irrespective of how much is derived as statutory allocation, with the high wage bills and other competing demands, the only complement will be internally generated revenue. The elected officers and key functionaries have neglected this duty and treated this with levity over the years either for political reasons, or because they believe the statutory allocation is a constant, or their assessment and revenue generation machinery is very poor and ineffective. This is dangerous to the development.

It has been argued that leadership in local government has been too fragile and perhaps not too enduring, partly due to conflict between elected officers and key functionaries conflict among elected officers. The greatest instabilities in the Nigerian political system take place at the local level. It may be an elected council today, tomorrow a Sole Administrator, then a Management Caretaker Committees etc. most of the time this happens when there is a tussle and disagreement between elected officers and key functionaries. For example, twelve council chairmen were suspended in one of the states for alleged fraud. They were asked to refund a total of one hundred and fifty million naira (N150,000,000) (George, 2010). In a similar development, the chairmen of Ibaji and Ogori Magongo local governments in Kogi State were suspended over what was described as non-performance and misappropriation of resources.(George, 2010) The effect of such frequent changes



either in the membership of the house or leadership of the councils inexperience and even ignorance of legislative proceedings often displayed by newly-elected members. Frequent changes on the leadership of the legislative houses increase possibility of leadership tussle and a strained relationship between elected officers and key functionaries. Such situation constitutes a clog in the wheels of development at local government.

### **Conclusion**

The work examined the duties of elected officers and their relationship with key functionaries in the local government and how this affects development at that level. Apart from over viewing major reforms that had taken place during the last four decades in Nigerian local government system, the work has highlighted the duties of both the elected officers and key functionaries in the local government. Instances and causes of conflict in the local government system and the effect on development at grassroots level in Nigeria are also adumbrated upon. The work ended by raising main issues as it thinks could give the state and the country a successful local government as a third tier setup in the Nigerian Federation. It is believed that if local government is to have any chance of achieving a corporate approach to its affairs, members and officers must both recognize that neither can regard any area of the authority's work and administration as exclusively theirs. If the council fails in its expectation, as the unnamed examples alluded to above, the relevant key official should be able to console himself that he did not contribute to it. Even so, he still shares the blame because the council to which he was an adviser failed.

### **Recommendations**

It is, therefore, incumbent upon all the chairmen and councilors of all designations to bear always in mind Benemy's (1968) description that council is a meeting of people who wish to discuss their common problems to find answers with which they all agree for the common good of all in the council area. Councilors must ensure that this is what they do throughout their tenure. This is the ultimate duty and responsibility of elected officers. They must create and maintain productive positive unity among themselves and with key functionaries of their local governments by endeavouring to cultivate an understanding and cordiality between themselves.

Councilors must equally realize that the key functionary is not just a servant who is paid to do as he is told. It is not disputed that the major policy decisions must be

taken by the elected members but the officers have a role to play in the stimulation and formulation of policy and in seeing that the councilors have available the necessary advice and evaluation to enable them to make the best decisions.

Considered either in terms of role or relationship, the key functionaries are very vital elements or resources for a successful working of a local government council and its ability to meet its obligations as third tier of the Nigerian government. This fact is to be recognized by both parties.

An elected member who demands loyalty must be prepared to be loyal to the paid officers. In this way, the paid officer would seek to do all in his possession to see that a given programme or policy is carried out as may be possible irrespective of whether it was counter to their advice.

Both elected officers and key functionaries must accept the dual nature of management in local government and the need for officers and members to accept that each has a contribution to make. They cannot be placed in separate watertight compartments. Both should be working in partnership towards a common end. Mutual confidence and respect can only lead to better decision making and, therefore, to a better service to the electorates.

Appointed officers must accept that councilors have a legitimate interest in the day to day administration of cases involving their constituents and that to succeed they must be fed with enough information and data to assist them do their work. It is frequently only a lack of information, which causes them to pursue such matters into the administrative machine.

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